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Metropolitan District Commission Parkway Restoration:

A Master Plan for Segments of the Alewife Brook and Mystic Valley Parkways

July 1996

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Summary

This report, *MDC Parkway Restoration: A Master Plan for Segments of the Alewife Brook and Mystic Valley Parkways*, proposes a vision for restoring a 2.2-mile contiguous segment of the MDC's historic parkway system. The project area encompasses MDC park land between the intersection of the Alewife Brook Parkway and Route 2 and the intersection of the Mystic Valley Parkway and the Medford Square Foot Bridge.

Through extensive community discussion, three primary goals guided master plan development: to restore this MDC parkway's historic character, to conserve the existing wetlands, and to respond to the recreational needs of this metropolitan region. The completion of a total parkway and park land restoration would cost about $13.5 million.

Recognizing the challenge in securing funds, the MDC phased planning recommendations as short-term and long-term. Short-term projects are ones that can be undertaken as soon as funding becomes available. They will greatly improve the parkway character and enhance user access. They are steps towards strengthening the park land character and enhancing public use in a timely manner.

The major short-term project recommendations are:

- the installation of the historic 1907 street light fixtures along the length of this parkway segment; estimated cost: $ 1,250,000.00
- the installation of a granite curb with a ten-inch reveal along this parkway segment; estimated cost: $ 555,050.00
- the planting and seasonal maintenance of four-inch caliper shade trees along the parkway edge; estimated cost: $ 445,000.00
- the removal of the chain link fence which encloses Alewife Brook; estimated cost: $33,100.00

This report divides the project area into five segments and describes in greater detail specific short-term and long-term recommendations and associated costs for each park land segment. One important proposal is to explore the naturalization of Alewife Brook, which might entail removing segments of the concrete culvert to free the brook from its current confines.

Recommendations are also made to revitalize the MDC's Dilboy Field recreational complex, constructing a multi-purpose asphalt path which would connect to the popular Minuteman Trail and other planned cycle routes, and securing rangers and park maintenance professionals to manage the park land.

I.

The Alewife/Mystic Greenway

A. Challenge

In the fall of 1989, three state officials toured the Alewife Brook Parkway. The officials parked their car near the heavily trafficked intersection of Route 2 and the parkway and walked along the parkway's open space border toward the intersection.

As the three neared the traffic circle, they were startled by a Great Blue Heron exploding in flight from the Alewife Brook, not fifty feet from the parkway's edge. One state official expressed surprise at the proximity of a wetland that would provide habitat for such a creature. She was unaware of the brook's proximity, since the dense underbrush screened the small brook from public view.

But this Alewife wetland - the last vestige of a once vast tidal marsh - does survive, preserved within the Metropolitan District Commission's (MDC) parkway system. The purpose of this report, *MDC Parkway Restoration: A Master Plan for Segments of the Alewife Brook and Mystic Valley Parkways*, is to promote a vision for the rejuvenation of this vital urban open space and greenway corridor. The challenge is to develop a plan that strengthens the parkway character, conserves the wetland, and helps meet the recreational needs of the surrounding metropolitan populace.

B. *Site conditions*

Alewife Brook Parkway open space

The Alewife Brook extends above ground from the Alewife T Station to its confluence with the Mystic River, and is contained within an open concrete culvert for about one-and-a-half miles. From the intersection of Broadway and the Alewife Brook Parkway, the brook flows out of the culvert along gently sloping banks overgrown with wetland trees and shrubs. The brook parallels the parkway from its intersection with Route 2 to the junction with the Mystic Valley Parkway, about a one-mile distance. Although the Alewife Brook is the park corridor's dominant natural feature, many people are unaware of its existence because of the dense overgrowth and the culvert's recessed, ditch-like nature.

On the parkway's brook side in Cambridge and Arlington, open space is quite generous, averaging about 300 feet from the parkway curb to the Arlington property line. A three-foot wide asphalt walkway parallels the parkway between Massachusetts Avenue and the rotary at the confluence of the Alewife Brook and the Mystic River. Dilboy Field, an MDC recreational facility which includes a small stadium, playing fields, parking lot, and tot lot, is located between Broadway and the Mystic Valley Parkway.

Located adjacent to the MDC park land are two important community and regional recreational resources - Thorndike Field and the Minuteman Bikeway. The Town of Arlington owns and maintains Thorndike Field, which consists of three large soccer fields, informal basketball courts, and play equipment. The popular Minuteman Bikeway, a ten-foot wide asphalt path, connects Bedford, Lexington and Arlington to the Alewife T Station. This heavily used bike path is within a few minutes' walk of the Alewife Brook. A small tot lot, which was constructed and is maintained by the City of Cambridge, is located within the MDC parkway open space border between the Alewife Brook Parkway and Shea Road.

The MDC's Alewife Reservation is located to the southwest of the project area, south of Route 2. This 92-acre "urban wild" provides critical habitat for numerous birds, mammals, and plants.

Mystic Valley Parkway open space

The 1.2-mile segment extends from the intersection of the Alewife Brook Parkway with the Mystic Valley Parkway in Medford to the intersection of the Mystic Valley Parkway and the Medford Square Foot Bridge. Wonderful views of the Mystic, a broad, meandering river, can be seen from the parkway, especially where dense undergrowth along the river's banks has been selectively thinned.

The parkway's open space borders are especially generous in this segment, and some wonderful old specimen oaks and maples have survived over the years. The potential is here, by simply enhancing what early park planners began, for creating a truly spectacular MDC parkway experience.

People often remark that this section of the Mystic River reminds them of the Charles River Basin. Indeed, the Mystic does have potential for supporting similar boating activities like canoeing and rowing. And like the Charles River Basin, the Mystic's generous parkway borders provide open space for picnicking, biking, skating, and simply relaxing.

Over the years this park has been used as a utility corridor by companies such as Exxon, Algonquin Gas, and public agencies such as the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority. The MDC's current policy is to locate public utility lines within the park land underneath a hard surface road or sidewalk in order to avoid negative impacts to park land. Underground pipes can limit the placement of trees and manhole covers. Pipe markers and control stations distract from a park's aesthetic appeal and can limit the recreation potential of open space. Examples of such negative impacts are visible along the Alewife Brook and Mystic Valley Parkway corridors.

Natural features

Although the MDC's Alewife Brook and Mystic Valley Parkways are affected by heavy traffic, large-scale development, and densely populated neighborhoods, these park lands provide vital open space for many residents of North Cambridge, East Arlington, West Somerville, and Medford.

The corridor is situated adjacent to dense neighborhoods of single and multi-family homes and occasional small-to-moderate-scale commercial development, but its general character is that of the traditional MDC parkway - a tree-shaded boulevard with generous open space borders. The corridor's natural features are the Alewife Brook and the Mystic River, which support varied species of animal and plant life.

The most interesting wildlife inhabitant, which links the present with its historic past, is a small fish, the alewife. Alewives and their cousins, the blue-backed herring, are anadromous fish which migrate each spring from the ocean to freshwater streams and ponds to spawn in their grounds. In the fall, the fry migrate back the same route to mature in the open waters off the Massachusetts coast. Alewives prefer to spawn in ponds, so they migrate up the Mystic into Alewife Brook and on to Little Pond in the Alewife Reservation.

The blue-backed herring are stream-spawners and travel up Alewife Brook into adjacent Wellington Brook.

Great horned owls, sparrows, red foxes, kingfishers, herons, american woodcocks, bobolinks, hawks, cottontails, muskrats, and meadow mice inhabit the area. Norway rats also live along the river banks but prefer areas where trash and debris accumulate.

The Mystic River and the Alewife Brook are part of an extensive watershed system which includes the Mystic Lakes, Spy Pond, Little Pond, Jerry's Pond, Blair Pond and Fresh Pond. "The water table (...in the Alewife Brook area) is quite close to the surface."[1] The 100-year flood plain of the Alewife Brook and the Mystic River includes the entire 2.2-mile project area. The Alewife Brook headwater is located near the Alewife T Station, and the brook flows under Route 2 and into the project area.

"Surface geology poses some potential problems in the Alewife area. In general, area soils were formed from the accumulation of glacial lake bed sediment of fine silts and clays with peat deposits developing over time. The result is a topsoil of considerable depth to bedrock and low-bearing capacity soils."[2] Mucky, badly-draining soils will make restoration plans more costly.

C. History

The Alewife Brook Parkway and the Mystic Valley Parkway are part of the historic 17,000-acre metropolitan park system which is managed by the Metropolitan District Commission. Charles Eliot, one of the park system's principal founders, envisioned the system as a kind of "library of open space" that would preserve the best of metropolitan Boston's natural features, including its woodlands, streams, and beaches. Eliot planned the park system as a series of woodland reservations, including the Blue Hills, the Middlesex Fells and Beaver Brook, and three major river reservations; the Charles, Mystic, and Neponset. A series of parkways, or green corridors, would connect these park reservations with the coastal beaches of Revere, Lynn, and Wollaston. The Alewife Brook Parkway was planned as a connecting link between the Charles River and Mystic Lakes Reservations.

Near the border of the marsh, which occasionally flooded, showing the agricultural possibilities

The Alewife area has a rich and varied cultural history. The junction of the Mystic River and the Alewife Brook was the permanent winter camp of the Menotomet Indians, a native New England tribe. In colonial times this area was an extensive tidal marsh known as the Arlington Plains. The only remaining remnants of the marsh exist within the MDC's nearby Alewife Reservation.

Each spring Native Americans would descend from the northern and western woods to establish their seasonal fishing camps in the Arlington foothills and along the banks of rivers and ponds, like Spy Pond and Little Pond. The marsh, in addition to providing a rich habitat for an array of waterfowl, was also rich with alewives, blue-backed herring and shad, which the tribes caught, dried, smoked, and stored as winter food staples. To a Menotomet Indian, Alewife Brook, which meandered from Fresh Pond to the Mystic River, was known as Menotomy River. Squaw Sachem, a tribal leader, "retired" to her wigwam overlooking the Mystic River after selling the land we now know as Charlestown, Cambridge, and Watertown to the English for her annual gift of corn and title to her wigwam.

In 1636 a "cartway" was laid out to connect Cambridge to Concord, site of today's Massachusetts Avenue Bridge over the Alewife Brook. A consequence of this new highway was the establishment of a fish weir on the Menotomy River (i.e. Alewife Brook) across from Matignon Road and Foch Streets, close to where the Church of the Immaculate Conception is located.[3]

The area also has a place in the history of the American Revolution. Most notably, Paul Revere rode up Massachusetts Avenue during his famous ride, and a number of skirmishes between the American colonists and the British occurred in the immediate area.

By 1900 old photos and records show that although beautiful, with a sylvan, meandering quality, the brook was quite polluted. A combination of run-off from adjacent livestock farms and the chemicals used in small businesses such as tanneries and brick factories degraded the water quality of this slow-moving brook. As the wetlands were filled to provide buildable land, people constructed houses near the brook within the floodplain. Homeowners and new business did not welcome the brook's natural flood cycle, especially when the results were a flooded basement.

Alewife Brook

A hundred years ago wetlands were not valued natural resources. Communities often located their less desirable businesses and town dumps at the town border, and historically, many of these fringe areas were wetlands. Many people used the wetlands, and especially streams, as sewers. Alewife was such an area to Cambridge, Arlington, and Belmont. Contributing to the gradual degradation and pollution of Alewife Brook was a combination of factors including its slow flow rate, which intensified flooding impacts, poor soils, loss of open space, and adjacent industries which used the brook as a disposal conduit for waste and refuse.

To improve the brook's sanitary condition and prevent a malaria outbreak, a report was prepared in 1904 for the State Board of Health which recommended improvements to the Upper Mystic River and Alewife Brook by means of tide gates or dams and large drainage channels.[4] In 1907 preliminary plans and estimates for purifying the Upper Mystic River and Alewife Brook were developed, and related land plans and sketches were prepared.[5] In 1908 land was acquired, from the Mystic River to Spy Pond and the branch to Fresh Pond, for these purposes.[6]

This acquisition was made primarily to provide for the purification of the brook, as directed by Chapter 529, Acts of 1907, and in accordance with an agreement between the Cities of Cambridge and Somerville and the Towns of Arlington and Belmont. It was agreed that those towns would pay the improvement's cost, to the amount of $125,000.00 above the cost of the land.

At the same time, additional land was taken by the Metropolitan Parks Commission (the MDC's precursor) to construct a parkway from the Mystic River to Spy Pond. Acquisition plans were being developed to connect the Alewife Brook lands with those of the City of Cambridge at Fresh Pond.[7]

In 1909 a contract was awarded for the construction of a new channel encompassing segments of the Alewife Brook and the Little River from Spy Pond to the Mystic River. This channel allowed for the draining of large marsh areas within the Alewife Reservation and the marshes which bordered Alewife Brook up to its junction with the Mystic River. In 1910 a contract was awarded for excavating the new channel for Alewife Brook.[8] The work was designed in accordance with the State Board of Health recommendations for sanitary improvements and minimizing the threat of malaria and resulted in the construction of an open concrete culvert which "channelized" and straightened the once-meandering Alewife Brook.[9]

By 1911 all excavation work for the Alewife Brook channel was completed with the exception of the upper section of Alewife Brook, which was completed in 1912.[10, 11]

The brook has remained relatively unchanged, although a chain link fence was installed along both sides after the accidental drowning of a neighborhood child in the 1960's.

Alewife Brook Parkway

Creation of the Alewife Brook Parkway was a significant urban design improvement which provided a real physical link among the towns of Cambridge, Arlington, and Somerville. The Metropolitan Park Commission (MPC) had originally considered gaining access to the Mystic Lakes by locating the parkway on a more westerly alignment than its present-day configuration.

The current Alewife Brook Parkway configuration proved to be a more direct route to the Mystic River and evidently considerably less expensive. The benefits of abandoning the original parkway plan were the preservation of the large wetlands of the Alewife Reservation and the preservation of the Alewife Brook's only open-water body.

Head of Alewife Brook, off Concord Avenue looking north

In 1897 the MPC landscape architects' report discussed establishing a parkway connection between the southerly end of the Mystic Valley Parkway and Fresh Pond Park in Cambridge. Two routes were considered: one by way of Alewife Brook, another by way of Spy Pond, Arlington.[12] Topographic plans were made that year of the country between Mystic River, Medford, and Fresh Pond, Cambridge, and of the shores of Spy Pond, Little Pond, and Little River in Arlington. A total of 597 acres was considered for possible parkway routes along Spy Pond, to be known as Spy Pond Parkway. The route along Spy Pond was abandoned in favor of the Alewife Brook route.[13] Although the Spy Pond route was less expensive to construct and connected a major population center with three large ponds (Spy, Little and Fresh Ponds), the Alewife Brook property cost less to purchase:

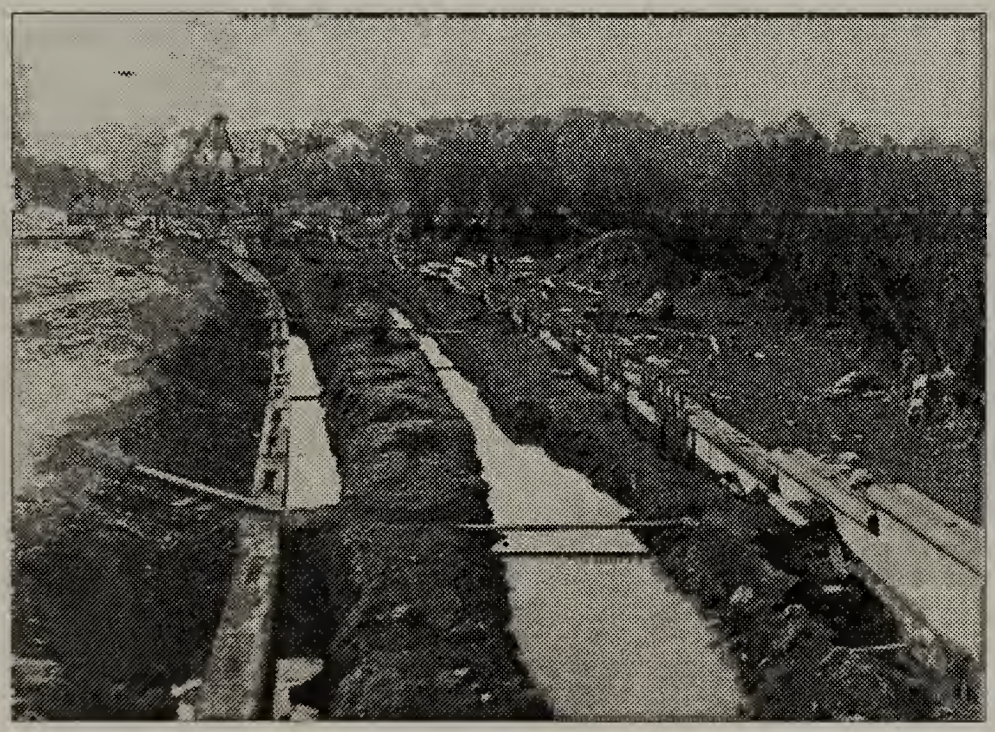
"...as this connection is needed not so much for any present use as to provide for the future, it may be wise to secure the cheap, low land along the brook at a moderate cost, leaving the greater expense and difficulties of construction to the future."[14]

The plan was to extend Alewife Brook Parkway from its beginning at Fresh Pond (Concord Avenue is where the present parkway begins and Fresh Pond Parkway ends) to Little Pond to Spy Pond and on to the Mystic Lakes, an interesting concept which would have linked the three great ponds into the parkway system. The Commission actually purchased what we now call the Alewife Reservation as an initial step, but abandoned the idea because of cost. In 1908, the present

Alewife Reservation was taken by the Commission to provide for the construction of the parkway from the Mystic River to Spy Pond.

By 1909 land takings were completed for parkway development. Parcels acquired included a strip from Concord Avenue at Fresh Pond Park to the location of the Central Massachusetts Division of the Boston & Maine Railroad, a strip along Alewife Brook in Somerville from Broadway to the Cambridge line through land of the West End Street Railway Company, and a corresponding strip on the Arlington side along Saint Paul's Cemetery.[15]

In 1913 a reinforced concrete highway bridge was built by the City of Somerville and Town of Arlington across the Alewife Brook channel at the Henderson Street extension, Arlington. The design and construction was supervised by the Commission.[16]



New channel walls for Alewife Brook during construction of Alewife Brook Parkway

In 1915, plans and estimates were prepared for the construction of the parkway from the Powder House Boulevard rotary to Massachusetts Avenue.[17] A contract was awarded for this construction in 1916. Due to acquisition constraints, it was necessary to build a portion of the parkway sidewalk overhanging the brook through the use of concrete retaining walls. The parkway was opened to traffic on December 2, 1916.[18]

The portion of Powder House Boulevard between the parkway and Mystic Valley Parkway, about one-half mile in length connecting the two parkways, was transferred by Somerville to the Commission for care and control in 1916.[19] In 1919 a plan of land in Somerville and Cambridge to be conveyed by the West End Street Railway Company to the Commonwealth was prepared.[20]

In 1931 a contract was awarded to widen the parkway to 40 feet between Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge and Mystic Valley Parkway, Somerville. This work was authorized by Chapter 450, Acts of 1931. The roadway of a portion of this parkway was of insufficient width for four-lane traffic, and the pavement had been in bad condition for a considerable period. Work was completed on November 18, 1931.[21] That same year the area adjacent to the parkway between Massachusetts Avenue and the Boston & Maine Railroad was graded and loamed.[22]

The Alewife Brook Parkway remains a vital link in the regional park system. As the connection between the Mystic Valley and Fresh Pond Parkways, the Alewife Brook Parkway joins the Mystic River, Charles River and Alewife Reservations. The parkway also links neighborhood open space (Jerry's Pond, Russell Field, Fresh Pond and the new Cambridge athletic field). The parkway is a physical and visual connection between these open spaces not only for vehicles but also for pedestrians and cyclists.

Mystic Valley Parkway

In 1893 landscape architect Charles Eliot envisioned, in his first report to the temporary park commission, acquiring the banks of the Mystic Lakes and creating "a river road which would provide the pleasantest possible route to Boston from Medford, Arlington and Winchester and all the towns beyond." (1893, p. 99)[23]

The first acquisition of 80 acres was made in 1895, and the first two miles of parkway were completed the following year. Another mile of parkway was built in 1899, to connect the parkway with the Fells (1899, p. 6).[24] During the next year, a border road was built along the west side of the Fells, completing the connection between the Mystic Valley Parkway and the Fellsway.

Community Involvement

Although the Alewife Brook and the Mystic Valley Parkways are historically important, preserve vital wetlands, and provide valued neighborhood open space, for many years these park lands received little attention from the MDC and the adjacent communities. Contributing to this state was a dearth of sufficient staff and maintenance funds, and the lack of a strong community to advocate for the care and use of this public land.

A turning point occurred in 1987 at a community meeting held by the East Arlington Good Neighbor Committee (EAGNC), a neighborhood group comprised of East Arlington residents who live near the Alewife Brook Parkway and park land which includes the Alewife Brook. Concerned about the brook's deteriorating condition, the EAGNC organized a meeting of the state and local agencies with jurisdiction and responsibility for Alewife Brook, including the MWRA, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the MDC.

The community was especially concerned about the brook's water quality and the physical debris and undergrowth in the channel and along its banks. The EAGNC wanted these agencies to, in their own words, "clean-up the Alewife Brook" and do a better job of maintaining the park land.

The 1987 meeting was helpful in setting immediate priorities and clarifying responsibilities. The MDC owns and is responsible for maintaining the parkway and the park land, which includes keeping the brook free of physical debris. The DEP is broadly responsible for monitoring and protecting water quality. Although local towns and cities have responsibility for their Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO), the MWRA, as part of its Boston Harbor Clean-up Program, is mandated to develop and fund the construction of a metropolitan CSO improvement plan. The neighborhoods also realized that they shared a responsibility for this park land.

For the first time, people looked at this park land as their neighborhoods' frontyard, not simply as someone else's property and therefore someone else's responsibility. The community learned that additional funding was necessary to effectively manage and maintain the property. The community believed that they could make this area a priority. Because of the EAGNC's efforts, local legislators secured $140,000 which enabled the MDC to remove physical debris from the brook's channel and banks, and the DEP performed water quality analysis to determine the types, amounts, and possible sources of pollutants in the brook's water.

The meeting was the first step in establishing the renewed cooperation between the community and the MDC which continues to this day. Perhaps the 1987 meeting's most important achievement was raising this neighborhood effort in a public forum, increasing everyone's awareness of this underutilized open space resource.

Five years later, in the fall of 1992, East Arlington residents joined people from the neighborhoods of Somerville, Cambridge, and Medford in a series of MDC-sponsored community meetings to develop a master plan for this parkway corridor. This report is a testament to neighborhood and agency commitment and promotes a vision of what this parkway can and should be.

II.

Plan Development

A. Goals and objectives:

The MDC determined that a master plan was needed to guide the reclamation and management of the parkway segment between the intersections of the Alewife Brook Parkway and Route 2 and the Mystic Valley Parkway and the Medford Square Foot Bridge. The master plan's primary goal is to establish a vision and strategy for reclaiming this park land.

Our planning objectives are:

- to reclaim the parkway character - that of a tree-shaded boulevard with appropriate lighting, signage and curbing - for this segment of the Alewife Brook and Mystic Valley Parkways;
- to develop a landscape design and maintenance plan to guide the planting and long-term maintenance of existing and proposed plant materials;
- to heighten public awareness of the area's unique wetlands character and to increase visibility and use of the Alewife Brook and Mystic River;
- to provide safe, convenient travel routes for pedestrians, cyclists, and in-line skaters, and to provide convenient links to other existing multi-purpose paths such as the Minuteman Bikeway;
- to update the existing MDC recreational facilities and existing parking lots;
- to mitigate the safety and aesthetic park land impacts of existing above-ground utility pipes and to render them less of a hazard and visual intrusion on the landscape;

- to reclaim park land from private encroachments for public use, especially riverbanks and wetlands; and,
- to estimate restoration costs for each park land segment and to recommend construction phasing as funds become available.

B. Planning together

This report, *MDC Parkway Restoration: A Master Plan for Segments of the Alewife Brook and Mystic Valley Parkways*, was funded by the Algonquin Gas Transmission Company (AGTC). In 1991 AGTC informed the MDC about their federally-approved plan to update the company's existing gas lines which lie within MDC park land. AGTC agreed to fund a program of mitigation measures presented by the MDC in order to lessen park land impacts. One of these mitigation measures was funding this master plan. This public/private partnership between Algonquin Gas and the MDC is an outstanding example of private support in planning and restoration efforts.

With the MDC's approval, AGTC engaged the firm of Brown and Rowe, Inc. to develop the master plan. The MDC Planning Office directed the master plan process and coordinated the services of Brown and Rowe.

The MDC, anticipating the expense of restoring this 2.2-mile park land segment, especially if the decision was made to naturalize the Alewife Brook by removing sections from its concrete culvert, asked the community and Brown and Rowe to identify realistic project segments within the project area that could be completed independently of one another.

The MDC recognizes the importance of community input and support for a project which will directly affect four communities. Because future projects might involve wetlands reclamation or alteration, much interest would be generated among the local conservation commissions and regional environmental organizations. With the great success of the nearby Minuteman Bikeway, there was increased interest amongst the cycle and in-line skate groups in extending the bikeway concept along the Alewife Brook and Mystic Valley Parkways.

Public input was incorporated in the planning process in three ways: the community meetings; questionnaires and letters; and meetings and phone conversations with individuals and small groups. The three meetings provided an effective forum for raising issues, prioritizing concerns, and critiquing designs. The meetings were especially useful in helping people understand that while the park land might literally be an extension of their yards, it is a public resource which the MDC is committed to maintaining and managing for the benefit of the broader community.

The MDC held three community meetings at the parish center of the Immaculate Conception Church in Somerville, Massachusetts. These meetings were held on October 27 and December 1, 1992, and January 19, 1993. Meeting announcements were advertised in local newspapers; invitations were mailed to community groups, environmental groups, and local legislators; and flyers were distributed in neighborhoods abutting park land.

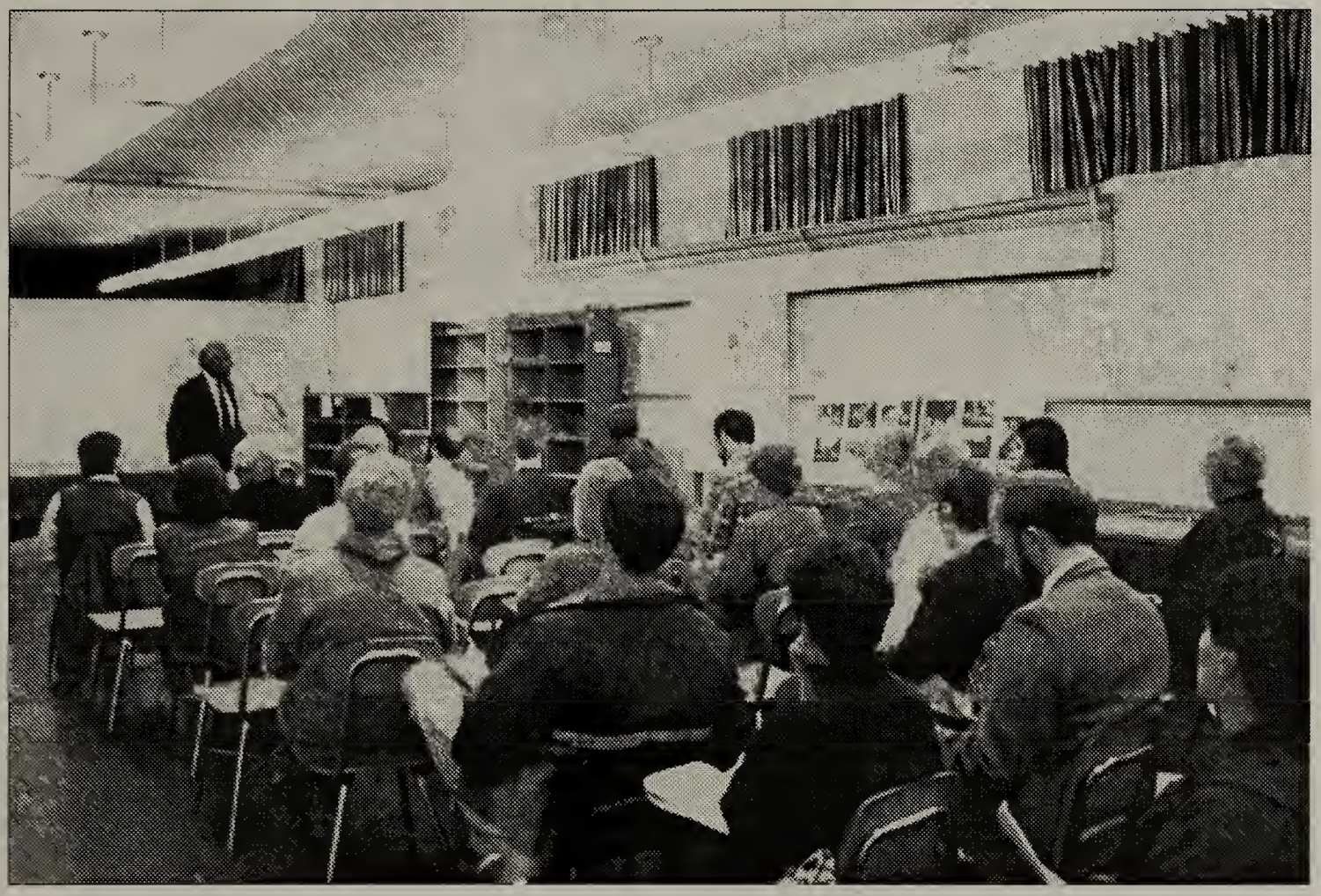
The meeting formats were similar in that an MDC planner served as moderator, and a Brown and Rowe representative presented site analysis and design recommendations for public review and discussion. A series of large working site plans at the 1"=20' scale were mounted in the room. At each meeting, everyone received a handout packet which included an agenda, a site plan, design recommendations, and a questionnaire/comment sheet. The questionnaire provided an additional way for people to register their concerns and comments. People also wrote letters. These letters and questionnaire responses are on file at the MDC.

The first meeting's goal was two-fold: to "familiarize" the community with MDC and Brown and Rowe staff, the site, and the proposed planning process; and to frame the project's goals and design issues to help focus future discussions. This was our program development meeting where we presented the challenge to the community and elicited their concerns and issues which would affect design development.

At the second meeting, Brown and Rowe presented a conceptual plan which incorporated the community's concerns raised at the last meeting. This meeting provided an opportunity to react to specific design solutions. These comments helped to further refine the plan, which was presented at a third meeting as a further design refinement, or schematic plan. Community consensus was reached at this meeting and the MDC agreed to further refine the plan and produce a document for future public review.

MDC staff and Brown and Rowe representatives were available for further discussion. Individual meetings were held with any group which requested a further briefing. People would often call the MDC or Brown and Rowe to voice a concern or discuss an idea.

Among the individuals and groups who participated in the planning process were: representatives from the Conservation Commissions of Cambridge, Arlington, Somerville, and Medford; planning officials from Arlington, Somerville, and Cambridge; members of the East Arlington Good Neighbor Committee, the Mystic River Watershed Association, Friends of Blair Pond, the Coalition for Alewife, North Cambridge Stabilization Committee, Medford Historical Commission, and the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition; and other interested individuals. Elected officials involved in the planning process included the Mayors of Somerville and Medford, State Representatives Jim Marzilli, Anne Paulsen, and Vincent Ciampa, and staff from the offices of State Senator Robert Havern and Congressman Markey.



Community meeting discussing the Master Plan in Somerville, Massachusetts

MDC Parkway Restoration

III.

Greenway Recommendations and Restoration Program

Overview

The project area encompasses all MDC park land, about 2.2-linear miles, between the intersection of Route 2 and the Alewife Brook Parkway and the intersection of the Mystic Valley Parkway and the Medford Square Foot Bridge. The project area was divided into five segments for planning and funding purposes. Since funds for a total park restoration are not available immediately, the plan allows phased restoration of the area by segment.

Each parkway segment is intersected by one of the following cross streets: Route 2, Massachusetts Avenue, Broadway, junction of Alewife Brook Parkway and Mystic Valley Parkway, Auburn Street, and junction of Mystic Valley Parkway and Medford Square Foot Bridge.

These five park land segments extend from:

1. rotary intersection of Route 2 and the Alewife Brook Parkway to Massachusetts Avenue;
2. Massachusetts Avenue to Broadway;
3. Broadway to rotary intersection of the Mystic Valley and Alewife Brook Parkways;
4. rotary intersection of the Mystic Valley and Alewife Brook Parkways to Auburn Street Bridge; and
5. Auburn Street Bridge to the Medford Square Foot Bridge.

Each segment description contains a brief assessment of that area's existing character, immediate and long-term site improvements, and preliminary cost estimates.

The site improvements are listed as either immediate or long-term. The immediate improvements can be constructed within the next one-to-five years. The long-term projects, for the most part, would require extensive design and engineering analysis, lengthy public and environmental permit review, and significant funding. Cost estimates, based on February 1994 prices, are listed for all the improvements identified within each of the five segments.

Priorities

Three primary goals guided master plan development: to restore this MDC parkway's historic character; to conserve the existing wetlands; and to improve the recreational opportunities for this metropolitan region.

Completion of a total park land restoration is estimated to cost about $13.5 million. Recognizing the challenge in securing this amount, the MDC has identified the following project priorities and their associated costs. These are projects which encompass all five segments and, when completed, will immediately improve the character and public use of the total 2.2-mile parkway area. These are also projects for which the Commission will seek immediate funding.

Parkway character:
Restoring the parkway character means adhering to the original early 1900's project concept which created a tree-shaded boulevard with appropriate lighting (historic 1907 street light fixture), curb (recommend installing granite curb with a ten-inch reveal), and appropriate signage.

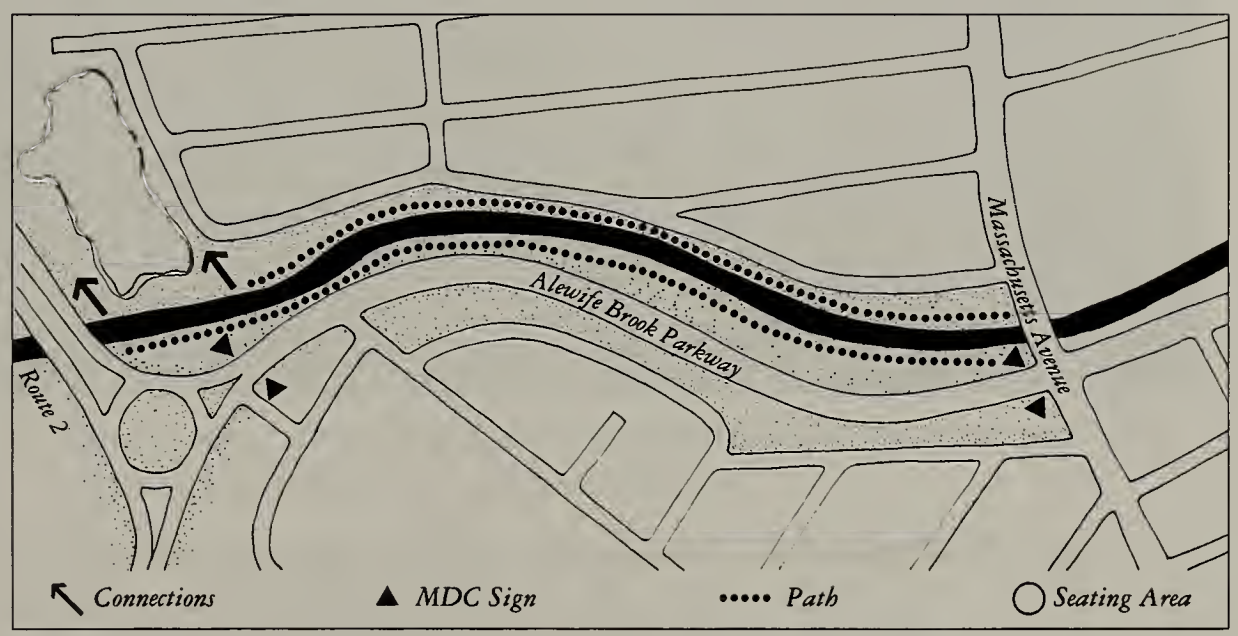
Multi-purpose path:
To provide for the need of pedestrians, cyclists, and in-line skaters, construct a bituminous concrete path with an average width of eight feet. Where space allows, an adjacent three-foot stone dust path will be installed for joggers.

Signage:
Several levels of signage are needed: directional signs for parkway traffic; directional and safety tips for pedestrians, cyclists, and in-line skaters on the multi-purpose path; and interpretive signs and graphics which provide information about the park system and specific historic and environmental highlights.

Management/maintenance:
Professional park ranger and landscape maintenance staff is needed to ensure the success of this park land. This requires the year-round, on-site presence of two MDC park rangers and a three-person staff of trained landscape managers.

A. Segment One

Alewife Reservation
Alewife Rotary to Massachusetts Avenue



Segment Character

Segment One is bounded by the signalized rotary area at Route 2 and Massachusetts Avenue to the north. Arlington is west of the brook and Cambridge is east of the brook. The park land varies from the open meadow east of the former cattail marsh in Arlington's Thorndike Field area to the densely populated neighborhoods of East Arlington and North Cambridge. The character of the surrounding area is predominantly residential on both sides of the parkway. The W.R. Grace complex, the City of Cambridge playground, and Arlington's Bicentennial Park are the only non-residential abutters.

The Alewife Brook is contained in a concrete culvert and fenced with four-foot high chain link. Weeds and mature vegetation grow within the fence's fabric and create an unkempt appearance. Vegetation on the brook's western/Arlington side effectively screens the parkway traffic from the residential neighborhood. In this segment, there are few views to the major natural feature, the Alewife Brook, except at the Massachusetts Avenue Bridge. Occasionally homeless people live in a somewhat isolated area between the Route 2 embankment and the brook.

Alewife Brook, bordered by vegetation, chain link fence and concrete culvert

The Alewife Station and the Minuteman Bikeway are important transportation destinations immediately adjacent to the segment. Throughout the park, manholes, vents, concrete utility covers and the fenced Algonquin gas "farm" intrude upon the park character.

Short-term Improvements

1. Remove the chain link fence and vegetation on Alewife Brook's Cambridge/parkway side. Leave any mature specimen tree that is a native and appropriately placed.

2. Install new granite curbing, with a ten-inch curb reveal, along both sides of the parkway to help separate the cars from the park land users, and to identify the park land use. When installing the granite curbing along the parkway, regrade where utility manholes intrude upon the landscape.

3. Install historic 1907 street lights along the parkway edge.

4. Reinforce the parkway tree edge by replacing missing or dying shade trees along the curb, Boulevard Road, and Columbus Avenue. Recommend new species of red oaks, sycamores, or red maples that withstand urban conditions. Augment the Fall 1992 sycamore plantings in the Route 2 rotary island by planting additional sycamores and red oaks along the Route 2 entrance to the parkway.

5. Install four new MDC directional signs for vehicles at the corners of Massachusetts Avenue and at north- and south-bound parkway lanes entering the Route 2 rotary. These signs would direct the users to the Alewife T Station and Minuteman Bikeway.

6. Install a "Shurcliff" metal gate at the end of Lafayette Street and at the beginning of the existing dirt road to keep cars out of the neighborhood and this natural area. Install lighting at the proposed new bridge to increase safety at night. Lights should be focused on path away from neighboring houses.

7. Maintain Segment One park land, and include proper tree care, such as pruning and aeration, and fertilizing care of mature and new trees; lawn management; regular trash removal; and regular cleaning of multi-purpose path.

Long-term Recommendations

1. Install a multi-purpose path for pedestrians, cyclists, and in-line skaters on the brook's parkway side.

   a. Construct a wooden bridge across Alewife Brook to connect this path to the nearby Minuteman Bikeway.

   b. Screen the neighborhood from the multi-purpose path with a planting of evergreen trees.

   c. Formalize the dirt path, perhaps with a stone dust base, on Alewife Brook's Arlington side. (This woodland path would allow pedestrians to explore the existing meadow area which abuts the cattail marsh which was acquired by the MDC in 1993.)

   d. Two locations are proposed for linking the MDC's multi-purpose path with the existing Minuteman Bikeway. One is on the former railroad spur, the northern boundary to the MDC cattail marsh, and another location is along the bottom of the Route 2 embankment, the southern edge of the cattail marsh (which at this point is actually phragmites). The railroad spur location is desirable because of its direct link to the Minuteman. The embankment path will need careful detailing in a sensitive wetlands area. The MDC, working with the Town of Arlington, can most successfully resolve this aspect of the plan.

2. Consider improvements to the Cambridge-maintained playground which is located on MDC park land adjacent to Shea Road in North Cambridge.

3. In consultation with traffic engineers, install a signalized pedestrian crosswalk near W.R. Grace to allow people safer access to the T Station by way of the new multi-purpose path.

4. After completion of necessary sediment analysis, hydrology, and hydrogeology studies, restore Alewife Brook to a more natural state by removing the concrete culvert. Investigate establishing a connection between Alewife Brook and the cattail marsh in order to enhance the area's wetlands and flood retention capacity.

5. Upgrade Bicentennial Park so that the area better complements the adjacent park land. Install lighting and directional signage. Repair the bridge railings on both sides of the Massachusetts Avenue bridge.

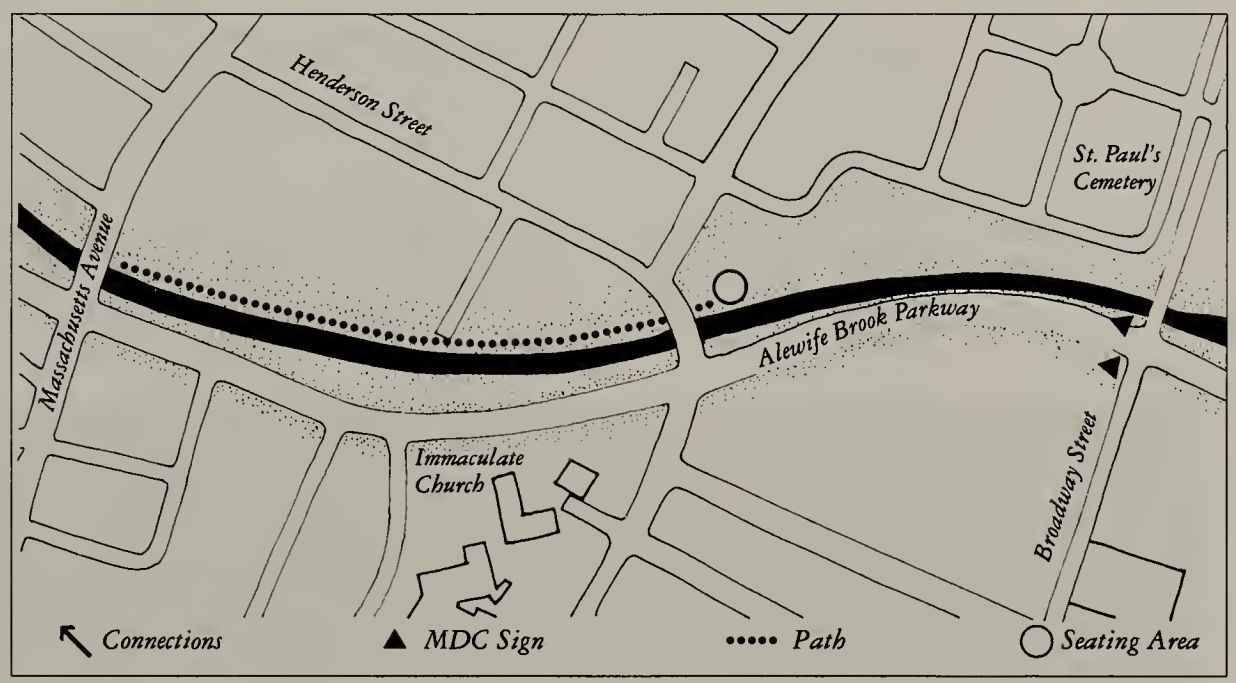
6. Mitigate the impacts of utility manholes, gas farms, and other utility line access points on the park land. Regrade and lower the utility access to below-grade installations of these facilities where possible. Develop an interpretative program involving graphics and perhaps sculpture to explain the existence and purpose of these utility lines.

7. Install information signs at Bicentennial Park and at the new wooden bridge across the brook. These interpretive graphics could discuss the historical significance of this place, especially the Menotomet Indians' fishing weir and the annual alewife migration at the Bicentennial Park area. Install signage at selected "gas farms" to explain the existence of the utility lines.

8. Consider installing sculpture in the rotary area that highlights the history of the immediate area and serves as a landmark for commuters, walkers, naturalists, and cyclists.

B. Segment Two

St. Paul's Catholic Cemetery
Massachusetts Avenue to Broadway



Segment Character

Segment Two is bounded by Massachusetts Avenue to the south and Broadway to the north. Arlington is west of the brook and Cambridge and Somerville are east of it. The Alewife Brook is still contained in its concrete culvert along the entire length. The brook is fenced until the Henderson Street Bridge, where the brook widens but is retained by two high concrete retaining walls.

Whether walking or driving along Alewife Brook Parkway, St. Paul's Catholic Cemetery provides a pleasant, green view for the passerby. The park land is very narrow west of the parkway here, and even more narrow on the east side of the parkway. The park land on the neighborhood side of the brook is natural and unspoiled with dirt jogging paths through it. St. Paul's Cemetery is inaccessible to park users. The retaining walls that contain the brook in the graveyard area are seriously deteriorating concrete with metal railing atop them.

Alewife Brook is screened from view by the dense knotweed growth and trees along the banks. One is not conscious of the water until nearing Henderson Street. Although the Henderson Street Bridge is too narrow for two-lane traffic, the bridge affords some lovely views of Alewife Brook. There is a metal gate west of the Henderson Street Bridge that prevents cars from entering the park land. North of the gate is an open area where youths "hang-out." Neighbors complain that litter which accumulates here attracts rats. Despite the undesirable activities which sometimes occur, the area is pleasant and affords easy access to the water's edge where people enjoy feeding ducks.

On the eastern side of the parkway, the land uses range from commercial (Mobil Station), to institutional (the Immaculate Conception Church), to residential, including the multi-story public housing project in Somerville. Because of the rise in grade of the parkway at the Broadway intersection, drivers have some trouble negotiating the intersection, which adds congestion for parkway users.

View of St. Paul's Cemetery from Alewife Brook Parkway

Short-term Improvements

1. Remove the chain link fence along Alewife Brook. Leave any mature specimen tree that is a native and appropriately placed.

2. Install historic MDC park lights along the parkway.

3. Investigate the limits of ownership of the Mobil Station. Encourage the owner to replant the station edges with large shade trees. Encourage the Church to plant large shade trees along their parking lot to improve the view.

4. Consider closing the Henderson Street Bridge to vehicular traffic, with neighborhood consent, and designating it as a pedestrian bridge. Repair bridge railings to make them safe for this use.

5. Install new granite curbing, with a ten-inch curb reveal, along both sides of the parkway to separate the cars from the park. When installing the new curbing, regrade where utility manholes intrude in the landscape.

6. Create a woodland walk (stone dust or wood chip path) along Alewife Brook's neighborhood side and plant shade-tolerant native wildflowers and wetlands shrubs such as rhodora. Create an open seating area, a quiet place, north of the bridge where people can enjoy views of the brook and feed the ducks.

7. Close off the dangerously narrow dirt path on the eastern side of the parkway to pedestrian traffic by installing a metal guardrail along the entire area from Woodstock Street to Broadway.

8. Install four new MDC directional signs for cars at the corners of Broadway.

9. Inspect the concrete retaining walls that line the Cemetery area to ascertain structural damage. The taller retaining wall, on the east side of the brook, shows signs of real deterioration when examined from the Cemetery. The railing on top of this wall appears to be in poor condition. The western wall should also be examined carefully by a structural engineer to ascertain its stability and condition. No work in this part of the segment should be done until the area is safe for increased pedestrian and bicyclist use.

10. Replace the missing or dying large shade trees along the parkway with species of red oaks and red maples that withstand urban conditions. No other tree planting is necessary in this segment.

11. Clean up trash on a scheduled basis to control the rat problem. Comprehensive maintenance should include care of mature and new trees, lawn care, trash pickup and eventual removal of all vegetation growing in the chain link fence on the neighborhood side of the brook.

Long-term Recommendations

1. Restore the Alewife Brook to its former natural state from the Massachusetts Avenue Bridge to the Henderson Street Bridge. Remove the chain link fence and vegetation in the fence on the neighborhood side. Establish bank stabilization measures.

2. Install a bituminous multi-purpose path on the brook's parkway side which connects to Segments One and Three. The existing sidewalk will need to be widened.

3. After consulting with traffic engineers, rework or re-stripe the Broadway intersection for safer vehicular movement.

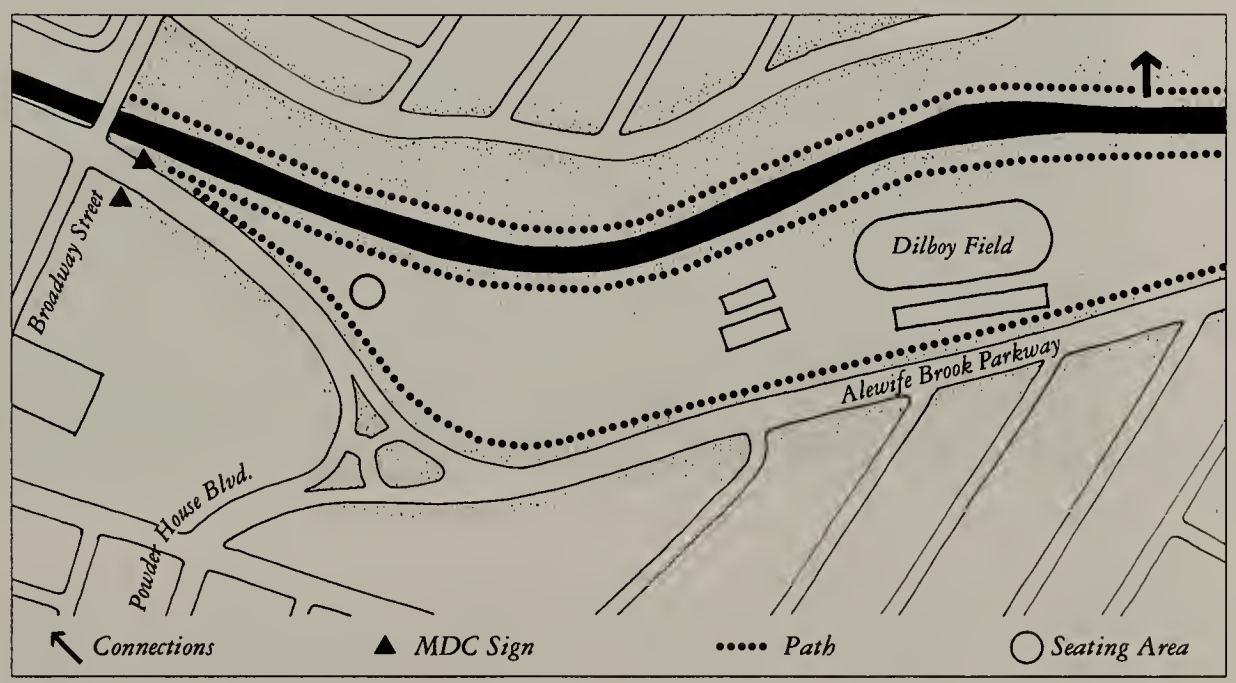
4. Investigate public access through the MDC park land on the Cemetery side of the brook with the Cemetery owners. Cemetery owners might identify another path location that could link the bikeway to Broadway. Install stairs from the Cemetery grade level up to the Broadway grade level.

5. Encourage the placement of town entry signs on city land and not on MDC land.

6. Install four information signs for the pedestrian or biker at Bicentennial Park, at the Henderson Street Bridge, and at the St. Paul's Cemetery seating area. These educational signs would direct the park users, but also inform them about the annual Alewife and herring migration, the history of the Cemetery, and about the native plants that line the woodland path.

C. Segment Three

Dilboy Field
Broadway to Mystic Rotary



Segment Character

Segment Three is bounded by Broadway and by the rotary at the junction of the Alewife Brook and Mystic Valley Parkways. Arlington is west of the brook and Somerville is east of the brook. Tufts University is located three blocks from the project site.

The segment is dominated by the active recreational facilities at Dilboy Field. These facilities include a football field and stadium, a large parking lot in disrepair, a pool facility, basketball and tennis courts in disrepair, two softball fields, and an outdated and little-used children's play structure.

The parkway's eastern edge is predominantly residential, with a large public housing project located at the Powder House Road rotary. The commercial abutters include Johnny Foodmaster, a liquor store and two gas stations.

Invasive knotweed, Polygonum vaccinifolium, needs to be removed and monitored yearly

Besides the MDC facilities, there are two former MDC buildings that are currently under the control of the MWRA. While the park lands east of the brook are dominated by the sports facilities, the park lands west of the brook are natural and open. Neighbors in the Sunnyside area reported that fires are frequent in the summer in the knotweed and overgrown grass.

The Alewife Brook is fenced almost continuously on the Dilboy side and partially on the neighborhood side. Japanese knotweed blocks the view to the water. As in the first two segments, old combined sewer/storm outfalls empty into the brook. There is evidence of a wide variety of wildlife along the banks.

Short-term Improvements

1. Remove the chain link fence along both sides of the brook. Subject to permitting and conservation commission review, control the knotweed by controlled spraying with wetlands "Roundup" right before the knotweed blossoms come out in late July or early August. Leave any mature specimen tree that is a native and appropriately placed.

2. Install the historic MDC lights along the parkway.

3. Strengthen the park lands' edge by removing the tall chain link fence along the parkway and by installing a lower, more park-like fence.

    a. Remove the chain link fence along the parkway near the Broadway Bridge and establish a seating area with outdoor barbeque in the more level section. There may have to be removal or transplanting of the recently planted white pine trees in this area to improve picnickers' visibility at all times.

4. Install new granite curbing, with a ten-inch curb reveal, along the entire parkway alignment and at the Powder House Road rotary. When installing the new curbing, regrade areas where utility manholes intrude onto park land.

5. After consultation with traffic engineers, install three new signalizations along this segment, one at Woods Avenue, another one at the public housing project, and one near the Mystic Rotary to connect Segments Three and Four.

6. Install five new MDC directional signs for cars at the corners of Broadway, and at the three entrances to the Mystic Rotary.

7. Landscape improvements: replace the missing or dying large shade trees along the parkway and in the parking lots at Dilboy with species of red oaks, sycamores, or red maples that withstand urban conditions.

    - Plant trees in front of the Johnny Foodmaster and Dilboy Field parking lots.
    - Investigate the limits of ownership of the gas stations and the MDC land and encourage the stations to plant their parkway edge with large mature shade trees.
    - Plant large shade trees in front of the "parking lot" south of the MWRA building.
    - Large wetland specimen trees could be planted on the neighborhood side of the brook.

- Investigate getting a neighborhood garden club or other volunteer group to adopt the Mystic Rotary, to plant it with perennials and assist with maintenance.
- Reseed the neighborhood side of the brook with meadow grasses containing native New England wildflowers, to encourage passive uses but also to cut down on lawn maintenance.
- Remove the evergreen trees and shrubs that hide the entrance to the pool area and make the complex appear unsafe.

8. Formalize the dirt paths on the neighborhood side of the brook with the installation of a woodland path with a soft surface. The path could meander through the meadow grass and should be connected to Broadway by a set of stairs.

9. Maintain park land in this segment and include care of mature and new trees, lawn and perennial care, trash pickup, continuous knotweed monitoring and removal, and twice-a-season mowing of the meadow grasses on the neighborhood side of the brook. Sport facility maintenance could be undertaken by participating organizations but should always include field aeration and care on a seasonal basis.

Long-term Recommendations

1. Restore the Alewife Brook to its former natural state by stabilizing its banks.

2. Install a combined bike/pedestrian pathway on the parkway side of the park land, which will connect this segment to Segments Two and Four. Connect this pathway to the neighborhood side of the park land with a pedestrian wooden bridge near the Dilboy pool facilities.

3. Renovate the Dilboy Facilities:

   a. Initiate a hydrological and hydrogeological study of the Alewife Brook floodplain area to understand why the Dilboy Field area and the park lands on the Sunnyside neighborhood have poor drainage, sodden soils and other water problems. This study should be undertaken before any Dilboy improvements are done so that the footings, structures and field reconditioning can be designed properly to withstand the wet conditions.

   b. Upgrade stadium building and facilities by making the repairs recommended in the "Study of Leakage and Structural Deterioration, Dilboy Field Stadium, Somerville, Massachusetts" by Simpson Gumpertz & Heger Inc., May 1989, before more costly construction is considered.

c. Renovate the current drainage system at the football field after the hydrological and hydrogeological studies are completed. Rework the soils of all fields, if necessary, to provide a drainage layer below the playing surfaces.

d. Renovate the pool and shower facilities. Check the structural integrity of the concrete retaining wall around the pool area. If sound, make cosmetic improvements to its surface.

e. With City of Somerville officials, study the possible location of an MDC skating rink at the Dilboy area so that more active MDC recreational facilities could be located in one area.

f. Remove the outdated children's play structure and install a new, more visible, multi-use structure or structures closer to the pool area and adequate parking. Fence the entire play area to keep children inside and to keep balls, and dogs out of the area.

g. Reorganize the large parking lot north of the Stadium to increase efficiency and to include 185 spaces. Plant shade trees in the lot to make the lot appear more park like.

h. Rework the vehicular circulation at the entrances to the Stadium and in front of the Stadium, not only to make the vehicular circulation work more efficiently, but also to replace some of the asphalt with planting.

i. Remove the old tennis courts. Replace with four new basketball courts. (No tennis courts are included here because there are four public tennis courts in excellent shape less than one-quarter of a mile away on the Mystic River.)

j. Renovate the field area south of the football field so that the fields are well drained and can be used more of the year. Retain the softball use with one league-size field, one little league field, and the potential to re-stripe the area into a football field after softball season. Install adequate seating and lighting for these uses.

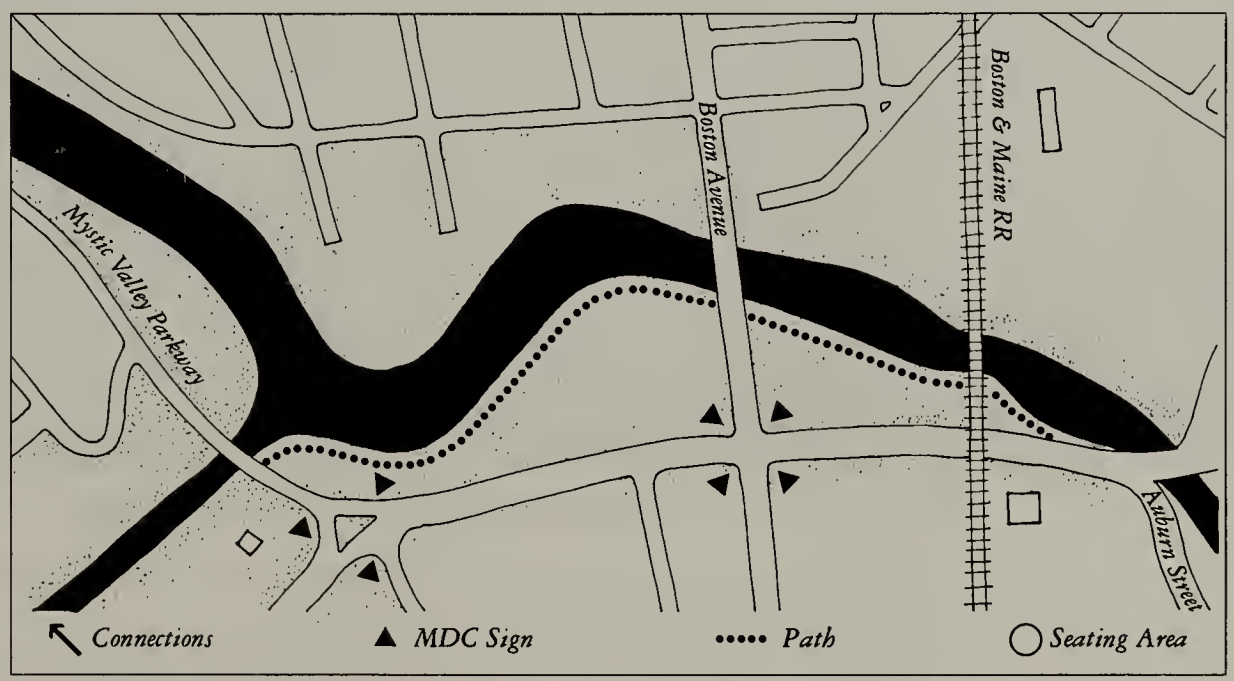
k. Maintenance in this segment is the most intensive, so maintenance facilities and staff should be located in this complex. Renovating the Stadium facilities and garage is a possibility, as is the reuse of part of the former MDC pumping station building.

4. Negotiate possible use of the former MDC pumping station with the MWRA as a ranger station for the entire project area. A staff of five park rangers, housed in this building, could provide the constant supervision and educational outreach needed in this area. Mounted rangers could be considered for the future.

5. Install four new information signs for pedestrians and bikers at the Dilboy parking lot, at both sides of the pedestrian bridge, and at the seating area near the Broadway Bridge. These signs would direct the users to the sports facilities, bike path, future canoe launch and ranger station, and would also educate the public about the wetlands and about the Menotomet Indian history of the immediate area.

D. Segment Four

Mystic River and Alewife Brook Confluence
Mystic Rotary to Auburn Street



Segment Character

Segment Four is an especially beautiful area which affords, from the Mystic Valley Parkway, occasional views of the Mystic River. Medford is northwest of the river and Somerville and Medford are southeast of the river.

Two mature oak groves make the park land attractive and well used at all times of the year. Wildlife inhabit the banks of the river. Commercial abutters such as the U-Haul Company, a liquor store, and Purity Supreme detract from the parkway character because few mature trees screen their facilities and provide a green buffer between the parkway and the parking lots. There is a problem area under the commuter rail tracks which is frequented by homeless people.

The parkway is flanked by a residential neighborhood comprised of two-family houses. Large shade trees line many of the sidewalks. The neighborhood side of the Mystic River offers a wide, sunny expanse of land that is rich with Indian History. The Menotomet Indians had their permanent winter camp here.

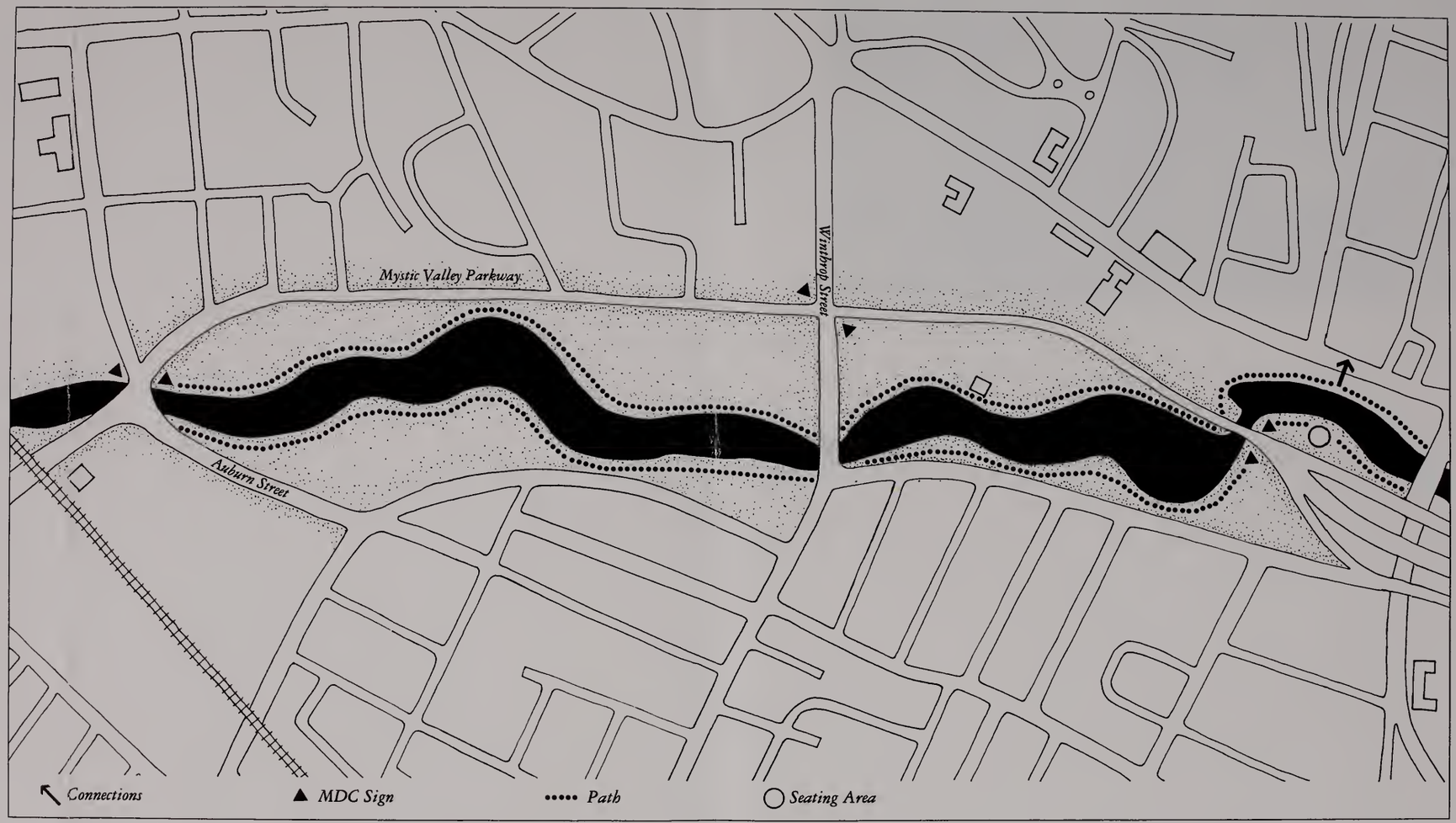
Short-term Improvements

1. Selectively remove some vegetation along the Mystic River banks to open up the views to the river from the parkway.
2. Install new granite curbing with a ten-inch curb reveal along both sides of the parkway and along Boston Avenue to the bridge, to establish the park land identity and separate it from the vehicular traffic.
3. Install the historic MDC park lights along the parkway.
4. Landscape improvements: replace the large shade trees along the parkway with species of red oaks, red maples or sycamores that can tolerate urban conditions. At the edge of the Purity Supreme parking lot, renovate soil and plant with new shade trees.
   a. Replant the "soldier" Euonymus that were planted at the base of the commuter rail embankment with a more naturalized planting.
   b. Monitor the health of the mature oak trees in the two groves on an annual basis. No other new tree planting is necessary in this segment.
5. Repair the capstones on the Auburn Street Bridge.
6. Remove the rusty backstop that has oak branches growing through it.
7. Maintain park land in this segment and include tree care, lawn care, trash pickup, and monitoring of bank stabilization.

Long-term Recommendations

1. Establish this segment of park land as a permanent passive recreation and wildlife habitat zone.
2. Install the combined bike/pedestrian pathway connecting this segment to Segments Three and Five. To avoid conflict with the parkway, the proposed bikeway can be safely connected under the tunnel on a wooden bridge on piles.
3. Develop programs to inform people about the area's rich history; investigate past archeological digs and encourage talks by the park rangers to area school children.
4. Install four new MDC directional signs for car users and five new information signs for the pedestrians. The information signs would be near the banks of the Mystic River and overlooking the Auburn Street Bridge. These could inform the public about the water uses of the Mystic River and about Indian history.

Peaceful water view which only a canoeist can appreciate now


Mystic Valley Parkway
Winthrop Street
Auburn Street
Connections
MDC Sign
Path
Seating Area

E. Segment Five

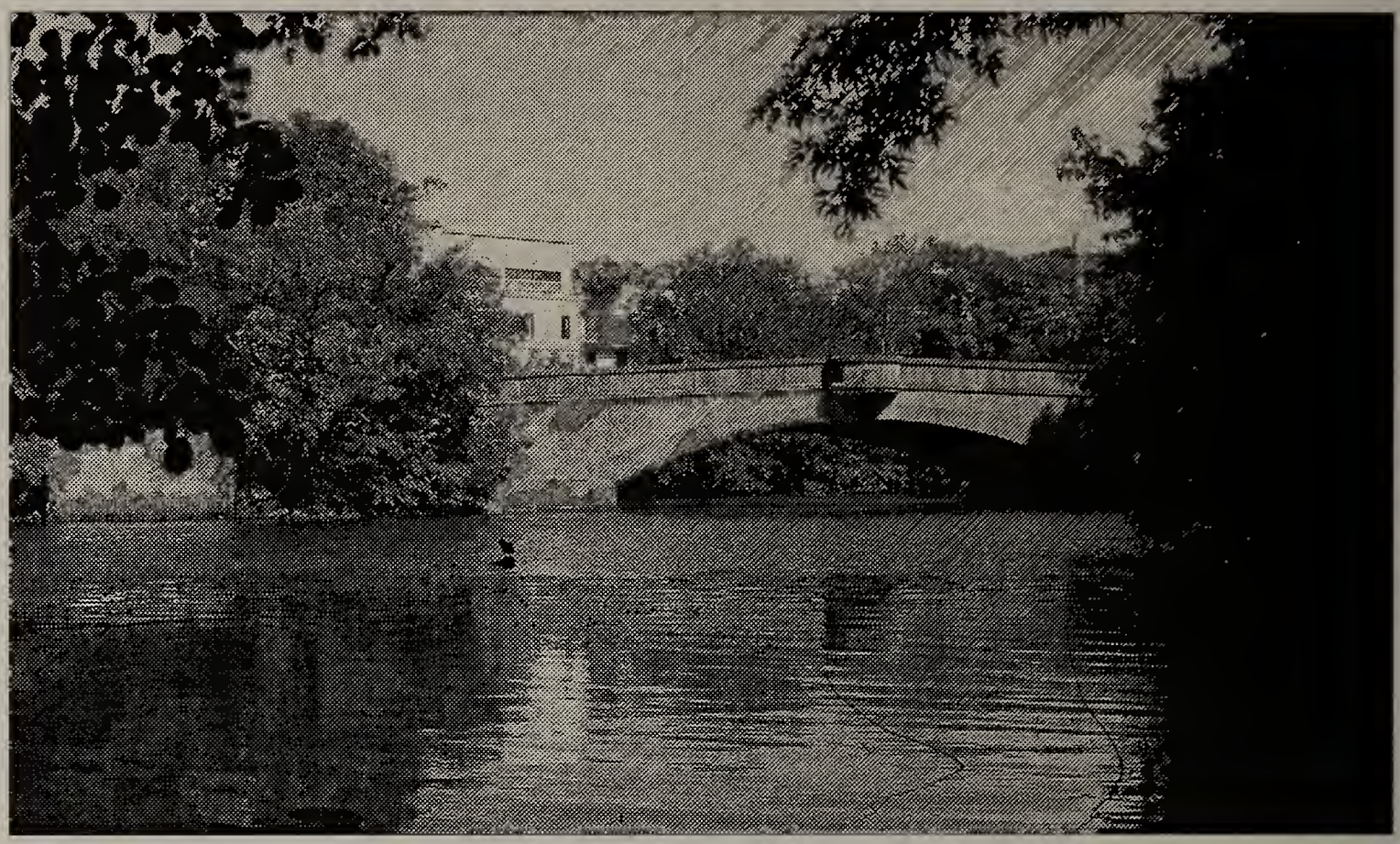
Medford Segment
Auburn Street Bridge to the Intersection of Route 93

Segment Character

Segment Five, like Segment Four, has great natural beauty and a true parkway character. Views to the Mystic River are possible in the winter and occasionally in the summer when the knotweed is not too dense. The park land on the parkway side is wider than in any other segment in the project area.

The Condon Shell has great potential as a gathering place, and there are three popular ball fields used by the City of Medford and others. There is an under-utilized parking lot close to the Route 93 intersection. Its close access to the river encourages illegal dumping in the river. A stream runs north from the Mystic River and used to extend into the once-rural neighboring land. An old fish ladder near the parkway is little used now as the stream appears to die under the parkway. There are vent and manhole intrusions in this segment.

Some mature planting along the river banks cannot thrive because of heavy knotweed infestation and there has been some bank erosion. On the river's neighborhood side there are serious encroachments along the river bank. Private boat ramps on this side of the river occupy public property.



Connection from Medford Center to park land by Medford Square Foot Bridge

Short-term Improvements

1. Landscape improvements: selectively remove and prune some of the vegetation along both sides of the Mystic River to allow views to the water during every season of the year. Eradicate the knotweed and highlight the native wetland species, like the white and gray birches and the blackberries.

    a. Replace the large shade trees along the parkway with new red oaks, red maples or sycamores that can withstand urban conditions, especially at the Route 93 end of the parkway. Plant native, wetland specimen trees and shrubs in the open areas of this segment to highlight unusual tree species that will be interesting to the general public and will provide wildlife habitat.

    b. Eliminate or transplant the trees around the Condon Shell for a better designed condition. After the redesign of the area has been done, the trees need to be thoroughly pruned and thinned to open up views.

2. Install new granite curbing along both sides of the parkway and along Winthrop Street to the bridge, to more effectively separate the cars from the park land users, and to clearly identify the park land use.

3. Install historic MDC park lights along the parkway.

4. Install six new MDC directional signs for cars at the beginning and end of the Route 93 ramp, at either end of the Auburn Street Bridge, and at two corners of the intersection of Winthrop Street and the parkway.

5. Maintain park land in this segment and include care of mature and new trees, lawn care, trash pickup, and ball field and play area maintenance.

Long-term Recommendations

1. Install a combined bike/pedestrian path connecting this segment to Segment Four and Medford Center. Begin to explore links to the commuting bike routes to Boston that parallel Route 93. These bike paths should be on the parkway side of the river, running close to the river and also along the parkway itself. Exercise stations could be installed along the pedestrian pathway closest to the water. During detailed design phases, a wider, model trail accommodating the pedestrian, the jogger, and the bikers should be considered, because there is sufficient land available in this segment.

    a. Install a hard surface path for pedestrians and bikers in the wide expanses of land on the neighborhood side of the public park land. Where the public access is close to the residences, install a soft surface woodland path for pedestrian use. Develop the woodland path theme about local wetland plant species and associated wildlife for park ranger interpretation.

Example of historic MDC parkway character of large shade trees and grass in Medford

2. Ball field redesign:

   a. Investigate the usage of all three ball fields during the summer season to determine whether all three fields are necessary. If not, remove the least used field so that more open space can be available to park users for a greater part of the year. Install more park-like, less maintenance-intensive fencing at the ball fields so that the ball fields will blend better into the natural landscape.

   b. At present, users use the side streets near the fields for parking. With increased usage of the area, parking may become a problem and a small parking lot for not more than 20 cars should be considered.

3. Connect Medford Center to this park land area by reestablishing the picnic area underneath the mature trees on the city side of the park land area. When the pruning of the Medford Square Foot Bridge plantings is completed, the close views to the water will attract users to this beautiful area.

4. During the detailed design and construction phases of the project, reconnect this park land area and pathway system to the "Lost Acre" to reconnect the broken link into Boston from the western suburbs. This link could also be reestablished through water uses, like canoe use of the Mystic River, Mystic Lakes and Alewife Brook.

5. Condon Shell area: Rework the parking lot near the Condon Shell to make it more efficient, park like and further away from the water's edge. The MWRA is planning work in this area, so any improvement plans should be coordinated with their efforts.

   a. Incorporate a new children's play area near the Condon Shell and redesigned parking lot. The play area should be divided into age appropriate equipment groups, from 0 - 4, and 5 and older. The equipment should be colorful and provide a variety of play opportunities.

6. Install a canoe launch on the parkway side of the river in an area close to the redesigned parking lot, so that canoeists can easily carry their boats to the launch area.

7. Install about six new information signs at the canoe launch, the redesigned parking lot, the Condon Shell, the ball field area, the exercise trail head on the parkway side of the river, and at the woodland trail end on the West Street side of the river. These educational signs can inform the public about the pathway and bicycle network, about the wetland plant species in the area, about the water uses on the Mystic River and Mystic Lakes, and about the history of the Medford area.

IV.

Acknowledgments and Footnotes

Metropolitan District Commission

Julia O'Brien, Director of Planning
John Krajovic, former Alewife Planner and Project Manager
Dan Driscoll, current Alewife Planner and Project Manager

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Maps

The fold-out maps were prepared by Brown and Rowe and Jon Roll and Associates. Brown and Rowe also prepared a set of base maps at the 1"=20' scale with all the design recommendations discussed in this report. Maps are available for review at the MDC Planning Office (617/727-9693).

Survey

This report's base map information was taken from material included in the MDC's Comprehensive Hydrology Study for the Mystic River Basin, which was completed by Camp, Dresser, and McKee in May 1978. Prior to finalizing design, an updated survey and hydrology study is required, especially in two areas: where the Alewife Brook flows beneath Route 2, and along the banks of the Mystic River in Medford. The survey should identify MDC property boundaries and the location of existing utility lines.

Additional material

The MDC Planning Office maintains copies of all written public responses received during the planning process.

An Alewife Area Ecology Guide by local naturalist Stewart Sanders was published by and is available through the Mystic River Watershed Association.

To obtain additional copies of this MDC parkway planning report, call the MDC Planning Office at 617/727-9693.

[1] Alewife Revitalization, Alewife Urban Design Study Phase II by the Community Development Department, Urban Design Section, City of Cambridge, April, 1979.

[2] Alewife Revitalization, Alewife Urban Design Study Phase II by the Community Development Department, Urban Design Section, City of Cambridge, April, 1979.

[3] Information from Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge, Report Five, Northwest Cambridge, by Arthur J. Krim, 1977, by Cambridge Historical Commission, published by the MIT Press.

[4] MPC Annual Report, January, 1905, pp. 97-115. The report contained therein is the "Report on the Improvement of the Upper Mystic River and Alewife Brook by means of Tide Gates and Large Drainage Channels," John R. Freeman, Civil Engineer.

[5] MPC Annual Report, January, 1908, p. 49.

[6] MPC Annual Report, January, 1909, pp. 18, 45.

[7] MPC Annual Report, January, 1909, p. 7

[8] MPC Annual Report, January, 1911, p. 52. Contract allowed for dredging only to Little Pond due to funding constraints.
Contractor Eastern Dredging Company, Boston - Award $51,660.00.

[9] MPC Annual Report, January, 1910, p. 38.
Contractor Auguste Saucier, South Framingham - Award $45,500.00.

[10] MPC Annual Report, January, 1912, p. 54.

[11] MPC Annual Report, January, 1913, p. 44.

[12] MPC Annual Report, January, 1898, pp. 67-68.

[13] MPC Annual Report, January, 1899, p. 72.

[14] MPC Annual Report, January, 1899, p. 59.

[15] MPC Annual Report, January, 1910, p. 14. Photos of Alewife Brook work following p. 16.

[16] MPC Annual Report, January, 1914, p. 41.

[17] MPC Annual Report, January, 1916, p. 48.

[18] MPC Annual Report, January, 1917, pp. 51-52.
Contractor Kelley & Sullivan - Award $25,607.75.

[19] MPC Annual Report, January, 1917, p. 53.

[20] MPC Annual Report, January, 1920, p. 22.

[21] MDC Annual Report, February, 1932, pp. 2, 13, 82-83.
Contractor Simpson Brothers Corporation. Final cost $87,918.61.

[22] MDC Annual Report, February, 1932, p. 4.

[23] MDC Annual Report, February, 1893, p. 99

[24] MDC Annual Report, February, 1899, p. 6.